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# There Is No Right Way To Do the Wrong Thing: The Ins and Outs of Research with Children

Steve Trotter

Tennessee State University, [strotter1@aol.com](mailto:strotter1@aol.com)

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## There Is No Right Way To Do the Wrong Thing: The Ins and Outs of Research with Children

### Abstract

The 3rd Edition of *Doing Research with Children: A Practical Guide* (2013). Greig, Taylor, and Mackay was reviewed and areas were highlighted. The text is best used as an introduction and refresher to conducting research with children. The volume addresses both quantitative and qualitative research designs and the theoretical context and frame work supporting the uniqueness of working with children. The text is suitably written for a worldwide audience and is not specific when it comes to ethics and guidelines for working within the United States. Therefore, researchers are encouraged to check with their own Institutional Review Board when using minors as research subjects. The book is well suited for graduate counseling and school psychology students, researchers working with children and adolescents.

### Keywords

Research with Children, Mixed Models, Ethics, Quantitative Design, Qualitative Design

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## **There Is No Right Way To Do the Wrong Thing: The Ins and Outs of Research with Children**

Steve Trotter

Tennessee State University, Nashville, TN USA

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*The 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of Doing Research with Children: A Practical Guide (2013). Greig, Taylor, and Mackay was reviewed and areas were highlighted. The text is best used as an introduction and refresher to conducting research with children. The volume addresses both quantitative and qualitative research designs and the theoretical context and framework supporting the uniqueness of working with children. The text is suitably written for a worldwide audience and is not specific when it comes to ethics and guidelines for working within the United States. Therefore, researchers are encouraged to check with their own Institutional Review Board when using minors as research subjects. The book is well suited for graduate counseling and school psychology students, researchers working with children and adolescents. Keywords: Research with Children, Mixed Models, Ethics, Quantitative Design, Qualitative Design*

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Greig, Taylor, and MacKay (2013) have done a great job tackling the basics of research with children. The text is divided into three very clear and concise parts comprising twelve chapters. The authors have both added to and updated their 2007 second edition. The authors stress the contextual role in investigations involving children. Furthermore, the authors stress the role of the child as a participant in the project. It is important to remind ourselves, collaborators and our students that research is something we do with children not to them and to hold central there is no right way to do the wrong thing when it comes to conducting research with such an important, yet vulnerable group of human beings. To this end, they have provided a historical review, the first of three sections, to set the context of research with children while exploring in greater depths the nuances that differentiate children versus adults as subjects in both quantitative and qualitative research designs. They address theory and theoretical frameworks, evaluation and design, ethics and and lastly special topics including communicating and disseminating research findings and working with children with special circumstances. They do this in a very readable fashion which will inform the naïve researcher and refresh the experienced investigator.

This is the third edition and contains many new references and a new and welcome chapter on communicating findings. The chapters contain stimulus questions, which might have been better served in the front of each chapter as advance organizers for key areas. This was done to some degree by providing learning objectives at the front of each chapter. The book is relatively brief at 290 pages and provides extensive coverage to more adequate depending on the chapter. The reviewer would have liked to see a little more critical review of some sampling techniques, snowballing and populations of convenience, and a more extensive review of the pros and cons of the use of social media and online data collection with the use of minors. The quantitative and qualitative sections are especially well written with a section on mixed design. The writers address the key concepts; probability and significance, levels of measurement, sampling, basic inferential and descriptive statistics, effect size and normal distribution. The ethics chapter on working with children provides an overview and addresses key factors of autonomy, justice, non-maleficence and beneficence derived from subject participation. I would have liked to see this topic expanded and introduced earlier in the book as it is an overriding concern when working with children and

acquiring both parental consent and child assent. The historical background could be shorter and the nuts and bolts of research expanded in scope and sequence in order to further the specificity of the text to match its title. The brevity of the section addressing surveys could have provided more detail and examples for the naïve researcher. The reader will realize quickly that this is not a United States specific text so it is suggested that the reader make sure of a "goodness of fit" between ethical guidelines for your geographical area and IRB and those suggested by the authors.

In summary, I am requiring this text for my dissertation and thesis students as a tool to guide their understanding, structuring, implementing and communicating their research project involving children as subjects. I found all the sections helpful and thoughtful and particularly found the section on participatory tools helpful and informative. I find many of my doctoral students in both counseling and school psychology over the past three decades consider parental consent the end all when it is just one of the primary steps in the process of conducting research with children and adolescents. I also find the back to back sections on quantitative and qualitative helpful in students deciding which method or combination will work best for their research topic. The writers make the information very accessible and as a primer and introduction it provides an excellent overview of the research with minors. The suggested readings provide the depth for specific topics germane to the individual's project which are impossible to cover in a single volume addressing theoretical context, design, ethics and dissemination. In addition, Sage's methodspace.com is a helpful ancillary to the text as are the recommended readings at the end of each chapter.

### References

- Greig, A., Taylor, J., & MacKay, T. (2007). *Doing research with children* (2nd ed.). London: Sage
- Greig, A., Taylor, J., & MacKay, T. (2013). *Doing research with children: A practical guide*. (3rd ed.). London: Sage

### Author Note

Steve Trotter, PhD, NCSP, is Professor of Psychology at Tennessee State University (HBCU), with areas of interest including assessment issues related to cultural competence. In addition, adult, child and adolescent personality assessment. I also enjoy and am very interested in advocacy for children with exceptional needs and have served as an advocate and consultant for both schools and families. I also have experience and expertise working with incarcerated youth, residential treatment facilities and disenfranchised populations. On the lighter side I have been a professional ski instructor and university lacrosse coach. He may be contacted at Tennessee State University (HBCU), Nashville, TN 37209; Email: strotter1@aol.com

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